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SUBJECT: CENTRAL EUROPEAN INTERIOR MINISTERS PLEDGE TO

STRENGTHEN POLICE COOPERATION

This message is sensitive but unclassified.

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY: At the annual meeting of the "Salzburg Forum" (an informal conference of Central European Interior Ministers) Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Romania pledged to strengthen police cooperation against organized crime, corruption, and terrorism. The ministers discussed the need to harmonize European asylum and migration laws and develop a strategy to bring Western Balkan countries in line with European Union security standards. Interior Minister Liese Prokop noted these issues would be priorities for Austria's 2006 EU Presidency. European Commission Vice President Franco Frattini addressed the Forum on the European Union's Hague Program, which aims to manage migration, strengthen security, and enhance law enforcement and judicial cooperation. The ministers issued a joint declaration at the conclusion of the conference (see text, para 6). End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Austria hosted the annual meeting of the Salzburg Forum in Graz on July 28-29, bringing together Interior Ministers from Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Romania. The Austrian Interior Ministry established the Forum in 2000 as a means to intensify regional political and law enforcement cooperation on European integration, border management, illicit migration, human trafficking, organized crime, corruption, and terrorism. The Salzburg Forum also welcomed Romania as a new member. Bulgaria had also received an invitation to attend and join the Salzburg Forum, but was not able to send a representative to the meeting because of a government crisis.

[1](#)3. (SBU) In her opening remarks to the conference, Austrian Interior Minister Liese Prokop outlined several priorities for the Austrian EU Presidency in the first half of 2006, including strengthening law enforcement cooperation in the fight against terrorism, organized crime, and corruption; and bringing Eastern European asylum and migration policies in line with EU standards. According to Prokop, expanding the Schengen agreement to new member states and developing a strategy to enhance

border controls in the Balkans will also be focus areas.

"We must all work together toward establishing an equally good security situation in Central Europe," Prokop said, "and contribute jointly toward more security in our eastern, southeastern, and also northern and northeastern periphery. If we do that, we act in not only our own interest, but also in the interest of the European Union." Prokop also set the stage for the 4-5 May 2006 Council of EU Foreign and Interior Ministers. Austria is working closely with its European Union counterparts to draft a "Vienna Declaration," a strategy for combating transnational crime and standardizing border controls.

14. (U) EU Commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Franco Frattini addressed the Forum on the importance of implementing the EU's "Hague Program" for security in Central Europe. Frattini stressed that the current threat from international terrorism made the Hague Program measures indispensable. Frattini urged closer cooperation in the fight against terrorism: "The special geographic situation of central Europe makes it particularly sensitive to big trends in illegal migration and organized crime like trafficking of drugs and of human beings. In a few years' time, the border controls between Austria, Poland, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary will be abolished. This situation makes that the Central European states are key players for the security gambit (sic) of the EU," Frattini said. Under the Hague Program, Frattini added, the EU Commission will promote greater exchange of law enforcement information, including criminal records and arrests warrants. Frattini emphasized that in the aftermath of the July bombings in London, the European Council (EU Summit)"strengthens the commitment to combating terrorism and upholding the principles of freedom, security, and justice."

15. (U) Text of Joint Declaration: "The Ministers of the Salzburg Forum in Graz on 28th and 29th July 2005 note with satisfaction that cooperation within the framework of the Salzburg Declaration 2001 has been very successful. In particular, the accession of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, and Slovakia as full Members to the European Union opened a new dimension for this process, bearing in mind the increased importance of regional cooperation in the enlarged EU. Following the agreement of the Salzburg Forum meeting in Budapest on 22 April 2005, the Ministers herewith welcome the participation of Romania in the work of the Salzburg Forum. With special regard to the present challenges to

be faced by the EU, the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum wish to express in the presence of Vice President Frattini their confidence in the continuation of the process of European integration and their firm support to the principles of the Hague Program and its implementation." End Text.

Van Voorst